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## **THE PARADOX OF GIVING – INSIGHTS INTO THE GIFT ECONOMY**

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### **Abstract**

The semiosis of giving in many cultures has been established through prolonged ethnographic studies, normally in the context of pre-capitalist societies. This paper illustrates the role of gifts and giving, termed the *economy of the offering* by Pierre Bourdieu in a health and well-being business and hence directly within a western capitalist system. This paper aims to illustrate the paradox of misrecognition in an economic exchange by examining the semiosis and social processes of giving; as well as putting a dollar value on the seemingly non-economic exchange. This will come through quantitative economic data produced by the company under study based on 14 months of sales data from 2012/13. Also qualitative ethnographic descriptions of the giving processes collected whilst working in the organisation over a three month period. The percentage of giving can vary significantly depending on the month, averaging 12.2%. More interestingly the staff in the organisation recognise the function of giving as a mechanism for generating sales and so have created complex strategies to weaponize the process, for as Bourdieu said himself “sociology is a martial art” and the empirical data in this paper verifies that.

### **Keywords**

**Bourdieu, Gifts, Economics, misrecognition, Strategy, Paradox**

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## 1.0 Introduction

This paper illustrates the role of gifts and giving, termed the *economy of the offering* by Pierre Bourdieu as outlined in *the economy of symbolic goods* (Bourdieu, 1998a). The paper focuses on a three month ethnographic case study with a health and well-being business in the United Kingdom (which shall be referred to as the company) to illustrate the semiosis behind the act of giving. More importantly this paper is written in the spirit of Martinelli (2014) and his invitation to create a “Numanities” whereby semiotics is applied within a new context. Given this the paper is an attempt to introduce an element of semiotic and linguistic thinking into socio-economic theory, the work focusing on service innovation in a commercial context. As such the work will read and be presented in perhaps an unfamiliar format to those accustomed to a more literary style.

Even though renowned innovation researchers such as (Christensen, 2011, Bessant et al., 2005) have noted that for an innovation to succeed, the different levels of managements and departments must use the same language because it helps to collectively frame a problem there is a lack of formal linguistic and semiotic content in their works. In the measurement of innovation there are qualitative descriptions (Linton, 2009, Garcia and Calantone, 2002, Hirschman, 1982, Hirschman, 1986, Hirschman, 1992), quantitative descriptions (John and Snelson, 1988, OECD, 1991, OECD/EC/Eurostat, 2005) and a mixture of the two approaches (Francis and Bessant, 2005, Tidd and Bessant, 2009, Bessant et al., 2005, Tidd and Bessant, 2011, Bessant, 2009, Bessant and Caffyn, 1997, Bessant, 2003, Noke and Radnor, 2004) but seemingly no impetus to guide the would be innovation researcher to comprehend how the socio-linguistic events occur which can render the exercise of comprehending such measures less efficacious. This paper aims in the smallest way to illustrate how this can be rectified through the applications of the semiotic and linguistic content in the works of Pierre Bourdieu.

The company was set up in 1999 by Dr Mariano Spiezia and his family, initially under the name Herbs for Life (Byrne, 2004). Dr Spiezia is a medical doctor and also an herbalist who produced 100 % organic skin care (Rowley and Spiezia, 2006). The company was based on the Lizard

Peninsula in Cornwall before moving into a specially designed health, well-being and innovation centre within the grounds of the Royal Cornwall Hospital, Truro. The company was the first UK company to have Soil Association certification across its entire product range, guaranteeing their products are 100% organic. The company targets ABC1<sup>ii</sup> demographics and high-end eco-spas whilst also producing oncology massage oils that are used by its in-house cancer charity.

## **2.0 Epistemological and methodological paradigm**

Pierre Bourdieu attempted to reintegrate sociological and economic practises into a singular model, as he saw the distinction between the two subjects as essentially false (Arimond and Elfessi, 2001, Svendsen and Svendsen, 2003). Due to this Bourdieu characterised his own epistemological position as constructivist structuralism in (Bourdieu, 1977) p85. This seemingly contradictory term was and is an attempt to overcome the dualities of structure vs. agency, subjectivism vs objectivism, the emic vs etic (Dressler, 2001) etc. In which “*the social sciences have so far allowed themselves to be trapped*” (Bourdieu, 1977) p4. This model Bourdieu called *the general theory of economic practises* (Bourdieu, 1977) p177. The theory has great breadth in being able to explain the role of actions internal to an organisation, the micro-economic interactions of an organisation and the wider actions associated with the macro-economy. This is why in Vandenberghe (1999)’s epistemological analysis of the works of Bourdieu he dubs his methodological approach polytheistic. It must be understood that the researcher uses the word theory in a lazy manner out of convenience, as nearly all of Bourdieu’s theory was founded through empirical experience and is not an exercise in empty scholastic dreaming (Grenfell, 2013).

The most simple characterisation of Bourdieu’s stand point is a form of generative structuralism (Harker, 1991) p3. In regard to this formulation it is needed to highlight the giant’s shoulders upon which Bourdieu based his theoretical constructions, and from whom he drew influence. In regard to this Vandenberghe (1999) said:

*“Bourdieu argues for a non-positivistic interpretation of the epistemology of the natural sciences and reformulates it systematically in such a way that the possibility of a naturalistic social science becomes possible”* p33

From the writers of natural science or more correctly natural philosophy Vandenberghe (1999) suggests that Bourdieu drew heavily from sociologists such as Karl Marx, Max Weber, Marcel Mauss, Émile Durkheim, Goffman and Mannheim, but also the phenomenology of Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Hegel and Heidegger (see Bourdieu (1996a)), the linguistics of Wittgenstein, and from the author's opinion Bakhtin (see Bourdieu (1977a)) but also from the Kantian epistemological traditions of Bachelard, Panofsky, Lévi-Strauss and Cassirer. In addition one might talk about his work as Susen (2013) has listing influences such as Eagleton (1991) and Žižek (1989)'s theories of ideology, Giddens (1984)'s theory of structuration, Boltanski and Thévenot (1991)'s theory of justification, Foucault (1975)'s theory of power, Derrida (1967)'s theory of deconstruction, and Habermas (1981)'s theory of communicative action. Naturally these authors had varying levels of influence upon Bourdieu's writings but it does serve to highlight the bearings of his work namely epistemological and linguistic philosophy, structuralism, phenomenology and sociological thinking. It is also worth noting that Bourdieu's syncretic integration of these at times seemingly conflicting positions is based upon him critiquing them as well as extolling their virtues, as he said his method was to:

*“Use Weber against Weber to go beyond Weber. In the same way one should follow Marx's advice when he said ‘I am not a Marxist’ and be an anti-Marxist Marxist. One may think with Weber or Durkheim, or both, against Marx to go beyond Marx and, sometimes, to do what Marx could have done, in his own logic.”*  
(Bourdieu, 1988) p780

Bachelard was a teacher to Bourdieu at the *École Normale Supérieure* and from whom he often draws (Meisenhelder, 1997). One of the most influential theories of Bachelard upon Bourdieu is that of epistemological rupture (*rupture épistémologique*) (Bachelard, 2004 (1949)). This is the process by which one causes a rupture in both the narrow confines of scientific epistemology but also a break with doxa or common sense “*sens pratique*” (Mesny, 2002). From this it is evident

that Bourdieu wished to achieve both a social rupture as much as an epistemological one (Barnard, 1991). This concept is key to understanding the integration of opposing scientific structures in Bourdieu's work, something the author wishes to introduce into the study of innovation. The *rupture épistémologique* is important in regard to understanding Bourdieu's influence on the paradox of giving. It is this dialectic or “*Le mouvement d'enveloppement*” as Bachelard (2012 [1940]) p137 termed it, aiming at a continuous critique of an work through its own means that helps to expose the paradoxical logic of economic interaction i.e. how economic actions are facilitated through the misrecognition of economic actions e.g. gifts and giving. It is important to note that Bourdieu's concepts were developed, tested and refined over many decades and so in fact represent works in progress. Due to this there are multiple definitions given by Bourdieu of the same concepts at different periods in his career. It is prudent to recall Nietzsche (2003 [1913]) on this issue “*all ideas, in which a whole process is promiscuously comprehended, elude definition; it is only that which has no history which can be defined*” p53. This is not to say that these definitions are contradictory, far from it, but that they give the author more than one way to illustrate what are at times opaque concepts. Sadly due to the restrictions of space these concepts are not explained in as much depth as they deserve but references to their sources will be given.

### **3.0 Data: the gift economy**

The specific characteristics that an agent must reproduce in themselves when entering into a symbolic exchange are of particular interest for Bourdieu. Equally in terms of organisational behaviour for a service company this is also a valid point of interest, as without a physical product much of a service is coded in the relationship between staff and service user. Bourdieu defines this concept in regard to Kabylia society in Algeria; although the extract is typically loquacious it does outline the key social actions that go hand in hand with service provision:

*“the exchange of gifts (or women or services, etc.), conceived as a paradigm of the economy of symbolic goods, is opposed to the equivalent exchanges of the economic economy as long as its basis is not a calculating subject, but rather an agent socially disposed to enter, without intention or calculation, into the game of exchange. It is for this reason that he ignores or denies its objective truth as an economic exchange.*

*We can see another confirmation of this in the fact that, in this economy, either one leaves economic interest implicit, or, if one states it, it is through euphemisms, that is, in a language of denial. Euphemisms permit the naming of the unnameable, that is, in an economy of symbolic goods, the economic, in the ordinary sense of the term, the exchange of exact equivalents.” (Bourdieu, 1998a) p98*

The economy of offering is applicable to both organisations that are charities, voluntary, community interest companies or even in private businesses. It characterises almost all organisational types within the health and well-being sector, as such it is a highly useful concept to operationalize. The only condition being that there must be misrecognition (*méconnaissance*) of the economic effect of the business. The main vehicle of euphemization of economic capital comes through the mechanism of gifts and giving, because economic capital has to be euphemized for the symbolic and social exchange to occur (Harker, 1991). An example comes from when Bourdieu (1989a) interviewed a priest about his pay.

*“First, the priest does not receive a salary, that’s the first thing! I think that is important, because whoever says salary says wage earner, and the priest is not a wage earner...priests are not wage earners...but we can speak of a special treatment...the priest pledges his entire life to the Church and, in exchange, the bishop commits to providing for his needs...But there is no salary! no salary!” p118*

The most effective method of euphemism is through discount and gifts to customers and trade partners. A very simple yet effective example of this is that the company offered free post on all customer’s orders for a year. Another telling process occurred when the researcher was learning how to package items, invoices for insertion into packages were to be folded to just display the names and address and not the price. The company runs many seasonal and event specific promotions as well: Queen’s Jubilee, Organic week etc. But most revealing to the gift economy is the Sage accounting system that the company uses. This software returns a zero value in the spreadsheet for sales when stock is issued but not paid for e.g. a special offer, staff’s monthly free item, an apology for a late order or just for the purpose of generating further sales. From this a price can be put on the gift economy of the company in pounds and examined as a total of their turnover in the same period. This includes the discount of 50% that is expected from trade partners, which

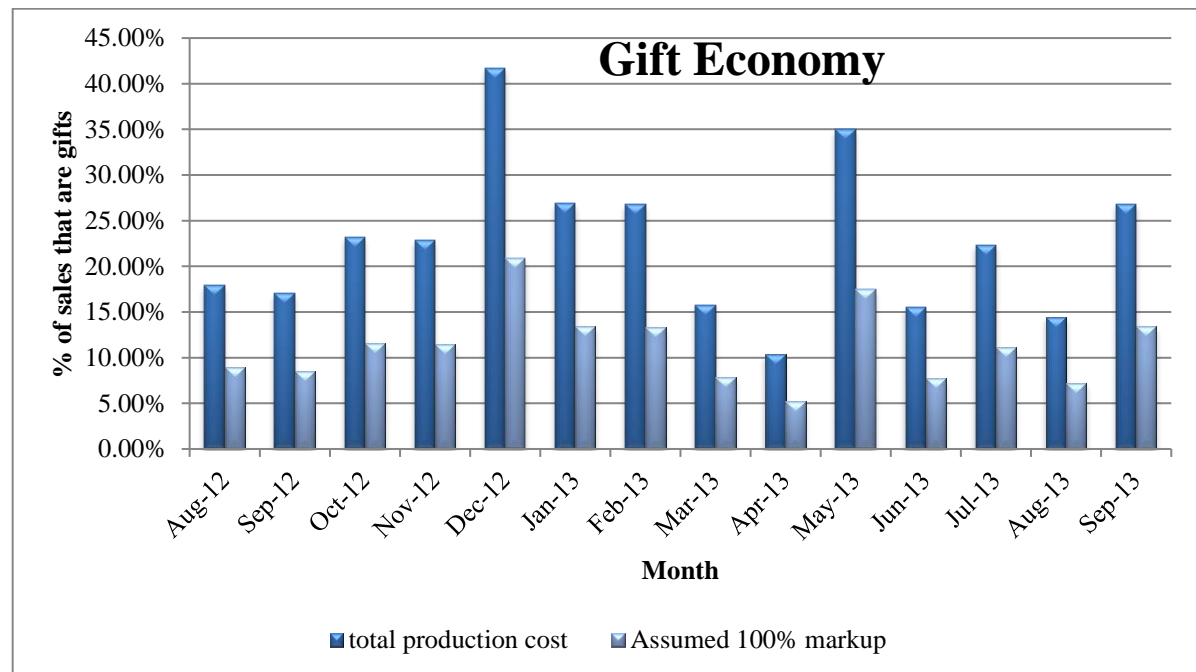
also strictly speaking is a constituent part of the gift economy. It function as a symbolic entry price into a market, what Bourdieu calls a form of *libido sciendi* or “*un paie du sa personne*” Bourdieu (2010) p83 as it is rendered in French, the payment upon each of us as an entrance to a social market. The data for this estimation of the gift economy was based on approximately 24,200 sales over a 14 month period. The data is subjected to the existing discount schemes used by the company, 10% if items collected in person, and 50% for long term high turn-over trade partners and then a sliding scale of 40%, 35% and 30% for less familiar or smaller trade customers. This presented an issue as the 10% is easily applied to the sales data as the items collected in person are noted in the spreadsheets. However for trade customer a flat 50% discount was applied as the researcher did not have access to all the information required. The raw data prior to deducting postage costs can be seen in Table 1.

**Table 1 raw data on gift economy**

<b>Month</b>	<b>Gift Economy</b>	<b>Total monthly sales</b>	<b>Percent of gifts%</b>
<b>Aug-12</b>	£2,757.66	£19,357.33	14.25%
<b>Sep-12</b>	£1,973.18	£15,057.30	13.10%
<b>Oct-12</b>	£4,744.21	£23,071.66	20.56%
<b>Nov-12</b>	£5,468.59	£23,900.99	22.88%
<b>Dec-12</b>	£8,627.04	£22,792.04	37.85%
<b>Jan-13</b>	£6,010.15	£24,788.20	24.25%
<b>Feb-13</b>	£3,093.00	£15,155.71	20.41%
<b>Mar-13</b>	£2,081.38	£14,957.67	13.92%
<b>Apr-13</b>	£2,286.42	£27,036.61	8.46%
<b>May-13</b>	£5,757.06	£19,137.55	30.08%
<b>Jun-13</b>	£3,103.52	£25,234.91	12.30%
<b>Jul-13</b>	£3,627.15	£23,011.58	15.76%
<b>Aug-13</b>	£2,527.72	£22,049.63	11.46%
<b>Sep-13</b>	£3,136.20	£14,183.24	22.11%
<b><u>Average</u></b>	<b><u>£4,499.11</u></b>	<b><u>£21,697.64</u></b>	<b><u>20.12%</u></b>



Table 1 represents the raw data, without accounting for external factors. For example if the cost of free postage (to individual not trade customers) for the duration of the sales period is then taken into account this alters the data. The updated information is shown in graphical form in figure 1.



**Figure 1 the gift economy at varying mark ups**

There were mistakes in the spreadsheets that were generated by the Sage accounting programme. Duplicate items were removed wherever possible but as software packages go it is not noted for its reliability, but it remains the only data on the subject that the researcher had access to. Also within the data there were items such as paper bags, or brochures that are not priced but have a production cost. The researcher found a discernable strategy within the strategy of the gift economy itself. For example the products that were being given to clients seem to vary depending on the situation. Most products were small sizes, but varied between very popular products to the worst selling items. As such it seems that the methods of giving depend on the relative importance of the clients in hand, as those who were given the bestselling items were the highest grossing customers. The loss of sale is calculated at a retail price loss not a trade price loss as there is a differentiation in pricing

structures depending on whom an item is sold to. This means the gift economy figure that was reached is a potential in lost trade, rather than the amount accounting to production cost. To get a more correct figure one would have to apply the existing pricing structures to both trade and retail sales in the data. Due to this the figures cited for the gift economy in Table 1 will be above the real amount in practical terms. It could easily be assumed that the sales costs are  $\frac{1}{2}$  or a  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the product costs to generate a more realistic figure, however the researcher did not have access to this information across the product range. If a hypothetical figure of 100% profit e.g. production cost are  $\frac{1}{2}$  of sales price, the average monthly gift economy over 14 months of data drops from 20.12% to 12.20%. The gift economy functions as an illustrative example, rather than a concrete depiction. The whole point of the gift economy is to facilitate trade, as such it would be wrong to call this figure a loss, if anything it stands to represent the importance of the concept to the organisation. With the pure economic data it may seem that the figures are an over statement and that one may come to ask why the company does this? And from a semiotic perspective, what does this mean? The ethnographic data gives several examples of the reasons why gifts are given in such a manner, helping to explain the paradox of giving in an economic context.

#### **4.0 Turning £5 into £50**

A therapist calls into the office to ask for training in the products, as in her words the company is “Not like everyone else in Cornwall”, after which an informal chat ensues, the language being full of structurally homologous linguistic capital (Bourdieu, 2004, Bourdieu, 2005) such as “me too” validation and other mechanisms for finding common ground. Even though the would be therapist made a *faux pas* by talking directly about the financial arrangements for clients which aggravated the staff “she’s not even a client yet!” They gave her an array of products to try that totalled approximately £5 in production value. The following week a friend of the therapist returns to buy £50 of the same item due to its effect on her daughter’s eczema. Not only does this highlight the effectiveness of the gift economy it also exposes one of the key ideas around the notion of misrecognition stated by Everett (2002) that misrecognition is what drives the nature of the field e.g. economic misrecognition, and that not to engage in this misrecognition is to commit:

“sacrilege *par excellence*, the unforgivable sin which all the censorships constituting the field seek to repress” (Bourdieu, 1983) p354 italics present in original.

This is clearly evident in the “she’s not even a client yet” statement by the staff. It shows wilful misrecognition and the social etiquette of a field are bound together in its own internal logic. The product quality is clearly a driver in this event but it is also symbolic and tacit social values in the gift economy that helps the exchange of information and products between customers and between the company that led to an increased sale. That is to say the *gift economy* is a social function that exists over a wide network area. This was not an isolated event in the three month duration of the ethnographic placement. A member of the sales staff once said to the author after just taking an order, with enthusiasm, that led to a spontaneous discount “I just gave them 10 % off, but they’ll come back”. This staff member clearly realises that one can weaponize a gift within a field’s social context. This is something that Bourdieu noted when he said “*I often say that sociology is a martial art, a means of self-defense.*” (Carles, 2001). Clearly the staff recognise it is a deliberate strategy for sales. This came out in more detail in some of the semi-structured interviews with the staff.

“J Do you see any similarities between the company’s staff and their customers?

B Yeah, I mean especially individual therapists that ring up and want to take trade accounts. Their main motivation is the ethical side of it, it’s ‘I want a product range that’s sustainable and I can use on my customers.’ And again, I think, our demographic, our lady who drives her Range Rover and takes her children to soccer, I think she wants to know that she is doing her part as well. It helps that the products work actually so you might have a different opinion, but my opinion is that it’s that ‘I want to be putting something back but I also want to be seen to be putting something back.’ Does that make sense?” emphasis added

This indicates that the staff recognise that there is a game being played. The quote continues:

J OK. Do you think that helps with the marketing? You know you said you talked about the customer experience as being one of the differentials of the company.

B I think it helps that the staff really believe in the products and from every trade show and event I've been to, and I've spoken to people about our products, I've had quite a few comments saying, 'It's nice to see that you actually believe in what you're selling,' and I don't think that I could personally go and sell something that I wouldn't use and didn't believe in." emphasis added

In this example the belief e.g. the workings of *illusio*: "the fact of attributing importance to a social game, the fact that what happens matters to those who are engaged in it, who are in the game" Bourdieu (1998b) p77 and *doxa*: "a particular point of view, the point of view of the dominant, which represents and imposes itself as a universal point of view" Bourdieu (1998b) p57, in Bourdieusian terms are driving the sales as much as the effectiveness of the product.

### **5.0 Legal capital, judicial capital and certification**

This weaponizing of the capital for the point of sales is something that also occurs due to it having various statuses. E.g. the company has a charity arm that runs alongside the organisation. This provides a different legal status but also in terms of the way in which the organisation as a whole is perceived. There are lots of forms of judicial capital Bourdieu (2005) in the company associated with the certification process. In Bourdieu's terms he described certification as an important issue when he stated that:

"the manifestation *par excellence* of what must be called, through a seemingly strange juxtaposition of words, *state magic*: the conferring of a diploma belongs to the class of the acts of *certification* or *validation* through which an official authority, acting as an agent of the central bank of symbolic credit – the state- guarantees and consecrates a certain state of affairs," (Bourdieu, 1998b) p376 italics in original.

The managing director of the company was also questioned about this and had the following to say

"J how important is certification to the company?

P Hm. Well, that is the million dollar question that keeps buzzing round in my head so for me, and for authenticity, it's really important and actually it is becoming more important in terms of export because in terms of exporting, for example, if we go out to America which I am really keen to expand to, they have very stringent regulations, the FDA regulations" Emphasis added

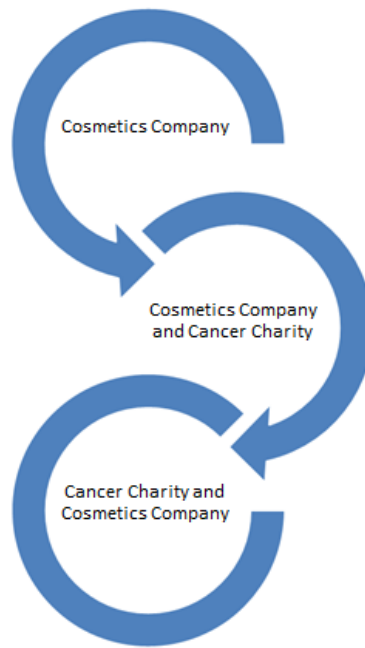
Here one can see why the symbolic capital<sup>iii</sup> is important because it allows the articulation of new positions in other legal frameworks. This is a direct example of innovation for market creation. The same is true in other health care areas that are working towards certification. The quote continues:

“P I think if we took Soil Association certification off all our products, would it make a huge difference? You know, I’m not sure. It’s one of the things...you know, to our current market, would it prevent growth to places like the States? Yeah, it would.”

The certification allows access to new markets but so did the status as a charity, which was used as an asset to the organisation. In regard to the purchasing of premises a member of staff remarked:

“F you know, so there’s all sorts of other possibilities, mainly because of that word ‘charity’.”

This ties in intimately with the statement that Bourdieu (1989b) made when he remarked that symbolic capital gives agents the “*power to consecrate*” p23. A further example of this weaponization of symbolic capital is how the organisation came to purchase a company car. The company approached a local dealer that had an electric vehicle as they thought that it matched the ethos of their company. The hybrid Toyota company car was bought at a significant discount due to the charitable status of the company’s foundation, and the skilful work of the managing director, also under the agreement that the company made a joint press release with Toyota. This trend continues if we analyse the long term plan for the organisation to transition in an entirely non-for-profit entity, where the corporate arm provides the funds for a charity sited at a custom built retreat centre. The transition from an economic to not-for-profit entity that is planned shows the *idée force* with which the idea is driven e.g. the long term vision or trajectory is a de-economised form of the organisation.



**Figure 2 a model of de-economisation**

Social capital (see Bourdieu (1980)) is manifest in the customer care that the company gives to its consumers. For example the managing director would spend a significant amounts time on the telephone listening to the specific skin issues that people had, before giving them advice on what to buy, like a doctor's diagnosis.

“J        OK, thank you. Alright, the next one is, how do you think your services and products differ from your competitors?

V2       I think we've got a much better customer service. We have a slightly more personal touch in that we will ring people and have a conversation instead of sending an email or just not bothering to contact them at all, like most companies which I've experienced this week! It's just so frustrating. So I think we are a little bit more unique in that way, and we are quite relaxed and chilled out which makes it quite a nice place to come and visit as well. Well, I think so!”

This social approach has helped to make word of mouth a powerful vehicle for the company which is reminiscent of Bourdieu's idea that the market place is a social event, just as much as an economic one (Bourdieu, 2005). Or as Bakhtin (1984) noted

*“the life of the word is contained in its transfer from one mouth to another, from one context to another context, from one social collective to another, from generation to another generation” p202.*

This was seen in an interview with the managing director:

*“P What we find with [ the company] is a lot of it [trade] comes through recommendation or gifts and stuff like that, or people will look and go, ‘These are my criteria. I may be a vegetarian, I may be a vegan, I am interested in organic, I’ve got some contra-indications, I’ve got sensitive skin,” emphasis added*

The role of advocates is also touched upon:

*“As you know, I think that the authenticity and effectiveness of the products is probably the biggest differentiator for us and I think what we do know is, we get some...well, we’ve got advocates, real advocates,”*

Again one can see the importance of the customer’s community of practice. The nature of the field is that you don’t just like a product, due to its ethical dimension you also become an advocate for it. This idea of returning to a more ethical position within a field is a subversion strategy in regard to cultural goods that Bourdieu noted; he talked of the issues as:

*“returning to the source, the origin, the spirit, the authentic essence of the game, in opposition to the banalization and degradation which it has suffered.” (Bourdieu, 1993) P74*

So the transition has become not just the ethic of the service but more importantly the way in which is delivered. There is a key point here that needs to be stressed, innovation is a process not an event.

## **6.0 Conclusions**

To encapsulate the main thrust of Bourdieu’s linguistic work is to state that *“A linguistic situation is never purely linguistic”* Bourdieu (1993) p67 which seems to hold true based on the data presented. And hopefully the socio-linguistic processes that underwrite the innovation process have

become clearer. Bourdieu's socio-linguistic depiction of the actions within institutional arrangements demonstrates the logic, tacit or otherwise of interactions. This provides a powerful adjunction to the existing work on service innovation description and the capture and management of knowledge. As what is more powerful than a mechanism to explain how and why that knowledge is captured, distributed and exchanged? According to Bourdieu all social actions are a competition that play themselves out in a social world. This competition facilitates the trade in knowledge, networking and contractual agreement between spars and suppliers through agents attempting to demonstrate superior knowledge and social status. In short the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu provides a nuanced and powerful tool to explain marketing and market orientation in the health and well-being sector.

Very few if any innovation frameworks have the ability to balance the dialectic between structural homologous clients and services, let alone the power to sociologically explain the situation. The advantage of the post-Marxist ideas of struggle that are present in the works of Bourdieu help to illustrate subversion techniques within a field. This is something that other innovation frameworks cannot really address. For example the issue of legitimacy of the dominant actors in a market and the subversion techniques of the dominated are essential to understanding the internal logic of a field or market. Through the data it has been addressed why one might want to stimulate the linguistic encounter, and it would seem that "*competence has value only so long as it has a market*" (Bourdieu, 1993) p81. As such to have a competence valued one must partake in the "game" with others, thus the exposition of shared values in the industry. The socio-linguistic interactions are directly helping market creation. The study of social-linguistic interaction to health services is a key element in comprehending their function. As such the journey in a narrative sense between the therapist and the patient must be seen as a process, if we consider the statement "*one can imagine a field of production which takes off and 'grows' its consumers*" Bourdieu (1993) p15, it is clear why Bourdieu is useful in this application e.g. as illustrated semiotics can help to articulate new positions in other legal frameworks for an organisation.



The paradox of giving e.g. the misrecognition or euphemization of an economic act as non-economic highlights that the process of undertaking an action in itself is in part what gives it value. This paradox plays itself out in an unconscious manner to enable the misrecognition, for example Bourdieu stated:

*“The transfiguration [of social, symbolic or legal capital to economic capital] is essentially verbal: to be able to do what one does by making people (and oneself) believe that one is not doing it, one must tell them (and oneself) that one is doing something other than what one is doing, one must do it while saying (to oneself and others) that one is not doing it, as if one were not doing it.”* (Bourdieu, 1998a) p115

The great irony being that the most profitable enterprise is one that is run on the rejection of economic capital, and almost solely prioritises volunteerism, charity and other forms of symbolic capital. It is this paradox of giving that Bourdieu’s linguistics and semiotic framework helps to expose in the service innovation process. The linguistic analysis was key in this work for comprehending the subtleties of the service innovation process and the basis for the reproduction of social values within an organisation or field. For example without the use of linguistics it would not have been possible to explain such concepts as economic euphemization or misrecognition, both between individuals and as a group:

*“the work of self-deception is a collective work, sustained by a whole set of social institutions of assistance, the first and most powerful of which is language,”* (Bourdieu, 1998a) p119

The statement that *“what functions as euphemism is the whole system”* Bourdieu (1993) p91 was found to hold true by the researcher’s analysis of the linguistic content, which could not be separated from the social situation that produced it. Or as Bourdieu (1990) put *“social functions are social fictions”<sup>iv</sup>* p195. But more importantly the linguistic behaviour and modelling of legitimate linguistic capital Bourdieu (2004) helped the author to highlight the mechanism by which “the way things are done around here” functions. This attitude that Bessant (2003) described as *“blocks and barrier to high-involvement innovation and the need to change”* p13 that is so damaging to the innovation process. In this manner Bourdieusian semiotics and socio-linguistics helps to highlight

why innovation is failing, as well as the way in which it may succeed in a manner other descriptions are unable to do.

## 7.0 Notes

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<sup>i</sup>The European Centre for Environment and Human Health (part of the University of Exeter Medical School) is supported by investment from the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund Convergence Programme for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

<sup>ii</sup> ABC1 refers to National Readership Survey demographic categories, crudely put ABC1 makes up a customer segment from upper class to lower-middle class. In regard to food ABC1 consumers trends are not just based on greater affluence but also on factors such as a greater awareness of health issues and ethics

<sup>iii</sup> “the mastery of symbolic resources based on knowledge and recognition, such as ‘goodwill investment’, ‘brand loyalty’, etc.; as a power which functions as a form of credit, it presupposes the trust or belief of those upon whom it bears because they are disposed to grant it credence (it is the symbolic power that Keynes invokes when he posits that an injection of money is effective if agents believe it to be so” BOURDIEU, P. 2005. *The Social Structures of the Economy*, Cambridge, Polity Press. p195

<sup>iv</sup> The original French can be found in Bourdieu 1982, *Leçon sur la leçon*, Les Édition de Minuit p49

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## 9.0 Captions for figures and tables

**Table1 raw data on gift economy**

**Figure 1 the gift economy at varying mark ups**

**Figure 2 a model of de-economisation**